



May 8, 2012

Fayetteville Advertising and Promotion Commission  
c/o Marilyn Heifner  
113 West Mountain  
Fayetteville, AR 72701

Dear Commissioners:

Your administration of the proceeds from Fayetteville's hotel, motel, and restaurant tax has played a vital role in making our city one of the most inviting and vibrant in Arkansas and the region. Your investments in the promotion of Fayetteville, in support of our city's cultural and recreational assets, and in assisting a host of activities and events have contributed significantly to Fayetteville's present success and bright future. Thank you for your service.

As a Fayetteville native, I have long been aware and proud of the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between the city and the University of Arkansas. That is why, as chancellor, I am especially pleased to have the opportunity to seek your support for a cultural project that will continue the tradition of shared benefits.

The university is currently planning to renovate its historic Field House into a stunning 700-seat, state-of-the-art venue for musical and theatrical performances. The estimated cost of this project is \$17 million. I am asking you to consider a commitment of \$1 million, payable over three years, to aid in the project's timely progress. The funds will go toward offsetting construction costs. The Field House interior will be converted to ensure compliance with today's high acoustic, lighting, comfort, and safety standards, while the building's stately exterior will be preserved.

### **How would this project benefit the University of Arkansas?**

The university presently lacks an adequate venue for performances showcasing the skills of incredibly talented students and faculty members. On-campus musical performances currently are hosted in the 238-seat Stella Boyle Smith Concert Hall, and theatrical productions are staged in the 250-seat University Theater. Both facilities are located in the Fine Arts Center which was built more than six decades ago. This situation hinders student and faculty recruitment, particularly for our music programs, since many colleges and even high schools have more impressive performance venues. The facilities, by virtue

of their size and quality, also hamper the university's ability to increase public attendance and support for its cultural and entertainment programming.

While our department of music has benefitted from the use of the Walton Arts Center, that facility is made available for use only a few days during the year due to its very heavy schedule. It simply is not possible to host all of the university programs in the Walton Arts Center.

To alleviate these problems and to further the university's stature as a nationally recognized institution of higher education, our intent is to build and operate a first-class performance venue to host some of the highest-quality performing and visual arts productions in the state and region. When the new facility is completed, a professional business manager will operate the space, and an improved performance ticketing system will be put into place. Parking will not be an issue since two large-capacity parking garages already are located within easy walking distance of the Field House.

### **How would this project benefit Fayetteville?**

A May 2010 study commissioned by the Northwest Arkansas Council found that the area's arts, entertainment, and recreation sector could "play a major role in establishing the region's identity and drawing new visitors." The wave of national publicity and new visitors created by the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art has provided a phenomenal boost in that direction. There may never be a more opportune time for Fayetteville to build on the great strides it has taken in elevating its arts and entertainment community. Now is the ideal time to expand and further cement the city's niche in Northwest Arkansas's cultural tourism market.

With the addition of the proposed performance venue, the university is poised to join the Walton Arts Center, the Arkansas Music Pavilion, TheatreSquared, SoNA, and other Fayetteville attractions as a key component of our city's cultural offerings. University musical groups to perform in the new facility will include the University Symphony Orchestra, Concert Band, Wind Symphony, Symphonic Band, Jazz Band, Schola Cantorum, Concert Choir, and Master Chorale. Theatrical performances will be staged by the Music Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre, and Boars Head Summer Theatre. The facility will also host the popular Summer Chamber Music Festival as well as provide space for public lectures such as the recent appearance by former President Bill Clinton who was the inaugural speaker of the Dale and Betty Bumpers Distinguished Lecture Program.

The university anticipates hosting 175 to 200 events annually in the performance hall, increasing the number of visiting acts and concerts by approximately 75 to 100 events during the center's inaugural years. At least 40 of these performances will feature large ensembles, collectively involving more than 600 students, bringing the students' parents, siblings, grandparents, and friends as well as general audience members to Fayetteville. The new facility will also allow the university to host clinics and outreach initiatives such

as wind, orchestral, and choral conducting symposia bringing as many as 400 professional educators and post-secondary music students from across the state and region to each event.

In addition, the performance hall will afford Fayetteville an additional high-quality venue for hosting events not directly affiliated with the university's music and theater programs. The university will collaborate with the Walton Arts Center, Fayetteville High School, the Fayetteville business community, and university-related entities such as the Headliners Concert Committee, Distinguished Lectures Committee, Greek Life, and registered on-campus organizations in commissioning performance hall events.

Two important outreach roles of the University of Arkansas are to enrich the cultural life and contribute to the economic development of our city, region, and state. A larger, more technologically advanced performance venue will enable the university to increase its benefit to Fayetteville's economy by establishing another attraction to draw visitors to our city and by giving our guests additional reasons to extend their stays. This, in turn, will generate significant additional revenues for our city through sales taxes, including the hotel, motel, and restaurant tax.

I hope you will come to the conclusion, as I have, that the commission's investment to assist in building the university's new performance hall represents a magnificent opportunity to secure shared benefits for the residents of Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas community for years to come. I look forward to further discussion regarding this topic.

Sincerely,



G. David Gearhart  
Chancellor